

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo  
Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

To the Honorable Governor Gina Raimondo,

We represent several small businesses within the restaurant industry here in Rhode Island. We are writing on behalf of the more than 99,000 small businesses and 220,000 staff that we employ across the state. Small businesses account for 52% of all Rhode Island employees - with the restaurant and accommodation industry being the second largest employer after healthcare and social assistance.

The COVID-19 crisis, and the necessary government-mandated gathering restrictions, has shuttered most of us. Those still left open are seeing as much as a 75% decrease in sales. While we applaud your administration for taking the appropriate measures to ensure the health and safety of all Rhode Islanders, the reality of the financial impact to many of us and our employees will mean even greater challenges ahead.

For many small businesses, it will be impossible to remain open even after this period of self-isolation if financial assistance isn't delivered swiftly. Furthermore, the downstream effect of high numbers of unemployment will mean that patrons will be unable to spend money for many months after this is all over.

With the gravity of the situation at hand, we implore the state to act quickly to pass an assistance package that will provide both short-term and long-term relief, including:

- Deferring sales, meals & beverage, and tangible tax payments for six months.
- Waiving tax penalties for late payment on sales, meals & beverage, and tangible taxes for six months.
- Waiving state payroll taxes for a 90-day period.
- Developing a state-funded, no interest relief program that would make loans available to businesses who have seen a decrease in sales, with the option to defer payments for six months.
- Abating or deferring rent/mortgage payments for a 90-day period.
- Abating or deferring utility payments for a 90-day period.
- Expediting and increasing unemployment benefits to staff who have been laid off due to decreased business related to COVID-19.
- Ensuring unemployment insurance does not increase due to COVID-19 related layoffs.

We realize that the state is facing its own economic crisis and relies heavily on these tax payments for its financial health; however, these measures will help ensure the solvency of small businesses and the tax revenue they produce long-term. Without them, small businesses and their employees face a truly catastrophic future. It is with great urgency that we request your assistance.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brady

Co-Owner, Hometown Poké



Paul Kettelle

Co-Owner, PVDonuts



Christopher Weitecha

Owner, Providence Bagels



Alexis Moniello

Director of Operations, Bayberry Beer Hall

